Union Railways

London to the Channel Tunnel

The new Union Railway described

London to the Channel Tunnel

The route of the Union Railway in London will use existing railways or run in tunnel. Emerging from tunnel at Barking, it will then run close to the existing London to Tilbury railway, and tunnel under the Thames close to the M25 motorway.

In Kent, the new railway will run within existing motorway and railway corridors as much as possible. It will mainly follow the previously safeguarded route east of Detling, but will run north of Ashford instead of going through the town.

Open for detailed route information

THE UNION RAILWAY

This booklet provides information about the route which the Government has announced for the Union Railway, the high-speed railway between London and the Channel Tunnel.

The Union Railway is designed to provide:

- **The main railway between Britain and continental Europe.**
- **A major increase in capacity and improvement in the quality of journeys between Kent, Essex and London.**
- **The transport spine for the development of the East Thames Corridor.**

The route has been chosen by the Government from options developed by Union Railways Limited, the agency company set up by British Rail in 1992. The engineering, environmental and financial plans for the Union Railway have been produced in association with more than 40 leading private-sector consultancies.

The detailed proposals for the railway will be refined and developed only after consultation with those affected. You can find out more by visiting our Information Centres - dates and times of their visits to your area will be announced in the local press.

This booklet also gives brief details of Union Railways policy on a range of issues - you can find more information in other Union Railways leaflets.

WHY IS THE UNION RAILWAY NEEDED?

The Union Railway will provide the essential capacity to meet fast-rising demand for international rail travel, following the opening of the Channel Tunnel. Around the turn of the century, the existing railways in Kent and South-East London will be unable to cope with the predicted growth in demand for travel.

The Union Railway will also offer major improvements in the quality of journeys between Kent, Essex and London - much faster journeys, greater reliability, and a wider range of destinations.

The Union Railway will carry both the growing international traffic, and more than 25,000 commuters each day, in much less space than a motorway, with much less damage to the environment.

As international trains and Network SouthEast express trains will use the Union Railway, existing railways will have more room, not only for improvements to passenger services, but also for international freight traffic attracted by the Channel Tunnel. This freight would otherwise cause a major increase in lorry journeys, and up to 45 million kg of additional exhaust emissions every year. The Union Railway could also itself carry freight.

THE CHOICE OF ROUTE

The route chosen by the Government, and described in this booklet, is based on the easterly approach to London, which the Government adopted in 1991. That corridor has been studied to find a route which is capable of meeting environmental standards, and which can provide regeneration opportunities and improved rail services within the South-East. While principally conceived as a twin-track, high-speed passenger railway, the route is also capable of carrying freight trains.

The new route runs to the Channel Tunnel from a new station at Kings Cross/St Pancras in London. It can also carry international trains from London Waterloo via the existing London to Chatham line and a link line from Longfield to the Union Railway near Gravesend.

BENEFITS FOR THE SOUTH-EAST

More than half of the peak-period trains on the new railway will be for travellers within South-East England. With new Network SouthEast express trains, the Union Railway can transform rail travel between Kent, Essex and London. It will carry many more people, with much shorter journey times, more reliably and in much greater comfort, to new destinations.

The Union Railway presents opportunities to support the South-East's economy, by improving transport links for development in the East Thames Corridor and for other regeneration projects along its route.

LIMITING DISTURBANCE

The Union Railway route is the result of a comprehensive sifting process, which rejected any option which did not meet the environmental standards normally applied to major infrastructure projects. Scope to further limit effects on people, property and the environment will be discussed during the consultation process - the results of this will be carefully taken into account.

It is intended that the construction of the Union Railway will be carried out under a strictly enforced Code of Practice, to be drawn up in consultation with Local Authorities. Construction traffic would use railway land whenever possible, to limit disturbance.

PROPERTY EFFECTS

By next winter, the detailed route of the new railway is expected to be reserved, or "safeguarded", against other development. It is expected that details of property purchase arrangements will be announced at that stage.

DISCUSS YOUR CONCERNS

Union Railways wants householders, property owners, and all others affected by its proposals to have an opportunity to discuss them in detail with designers, planners and environmental specialists. This will be possible at the Information Centres which will be visiting about 40 locations along the route. The location and opening hours of the Centres will be announced in the local press.

Consultation is also being carried out with Local Authorities and other interested bodies. The Information Centres will return in the autumn to provide details of the outcome of the consultation process.

The Information Centres are intended to provide the best opportunity for direct contact with Union Railways. But if you are unable to visit one of the Centres, or if you would like more information, then please write to the address overleaf, or phone 081 760 5002 and speak to one of the liaison team.

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Based upon the current edition of the Ordnance Survey 1:250,000 'Routemaster' series map and reproduced by the British Railways Board with the sanction of H.M. Stationery Office. Crown Copyright Reserved.

KEY

The Union Railway

(Showing alternative options in London)

Tunnel

London to the Channel Tunnel

Camden & Islington: St Pancras and Kings Cross stations

KINGS CROSS/ST PANCRAS TO BARKING

There are two options for the Union Railway's London terminal, and for the route between the terminal and Barking.

One option would use a refurbished and extended St Pancras terminus, with a new line connecting it across the railway lands north of Kings Cross to the North London Line. The Union Railway would have two tracks within the existing North London Line railway boundary, as far as a tunnel entrance west of Dalston. The tunnelled route would continue under Hackney and Stratford to Barking.

The other option would have a low-level station at Kings Cross. The new railway would run underground to the south-east, beneath Finsbury, Shoreditch Park and Victoria Park to Stratford and Barking.

A study of the two options for the London terminal will report to Government in the autumn. Either terminal would have new links to the West Coast, East Coast and Midland main lines. Each is compatible with the Thameslink 2000 proposals for an improved cross-London railway network.

At Stratford, the alternative tunnelled routes from both London terminals run across the railway lands to the north of the existing station. Whichever route is chosen, it could run at a depth of 25 metres or, at additional cost, it could run in a reinforced concrete box structure about 11 metres below the surface, which would permit a station to be constructed in the future.

Barking: Barking tunnel entrance and Alfreds Way

BARKING TO THE THAMES

The tunnelled route from the London terminal will emerge at a portal just east of Barking station. The new railway will continue on the surface, taking over two little-used tracks of the existing four-track railway, as far as Ripple Lane Freightliner terminal. East from Ripple Lane, to Purfleet, the new railway will run on the south of the existing London to Tilbury railway, crossing the edge of Rainham Marshes.

The Union Railway will bridge the existing railway (and could have a junction with it) just west of Purfleet, and continue immediately to the south of the Purfleet By-Pass. Crossing the London-Tilbury railway again east of Purfleet, it will then pass over the roadway rising from the Dartford tunnel, and immediately under the approach viaduct of the Queen Elizabeth II Bridge.

The River Thames will be crossed by a 3.2km tunnel from Thurrock Marshes to Swanscombe - the railway will go into tunnel before reaching the protected area for waterfowl on West Thurrock Marshes.

THE THAMES TO THE MEDWAY

Emerging from the Thames tunnel in the Swanscombe peninsula, the new railway will continue with a bridge under the existing Gravesend to Dartford railway, and will then run along the Ebbsfleet valley between Swanscombe and Northfleet, passing through an open area of disused quarries and sports grounds. There will be a junction here with the existing Network SouthEast line, enabling fast domestic services to run over the Union Railway between London and Gravesend, the Medway Towns and north-east Kent.

The Union Railway will then either run in tunnel under Pepper Hill, or run south of the hill on the surface. The railway will continue close to the A2 road on its south side. A junction and section of new line, running along part of the disused Gravesend West branch line, will connect the new line to the existing railway near Longfield, providing a connection for international trains to and from London Waterloo International station.

The new railway will pass over the A227 Wrotham Road on a low viaduct, and continue on agricultural land, offset from the A2 by about 200 metres. It will run in cutting through Scalers Hill and Ashenbank Wood, and cross the northern edge of Cobham Park, where it will run about 150 metres from the road, curving away from the road at Junction 1 of the M2 motorway to avoid a reservoir and the proposed new motorway interchange.

Descending towards the Medway, the route will run beneath the A228 road, and cross the London to Chatham and the Strood to Paddock Wood railways. It will then bridge the Medway, south of the motorway crossing.

Gravesham: Pepper Hill and the A2

THE MEDWAY TO DETLING

East of the Medway, the railway will run south of the M2 motorway, climbing along the Nashenden Valley. South of Upper Nashenden Farm, in Bridge Woods, the railway will enter 3.5km of tunnel under Blue Bell Hill. The railway will emerge from the tunnel to the south of Lower Warren Road, and run in cutting alongside the A229 road.

Turning east, the railway will run in a short tunnel, emerging to pass south of Boxley in open country, and at a lower level than earlier proposals, to reduce intrusion. Another short tunnel will take the railway close to the M20 motorway, passing south of Detling and under the A249 road.

DETLING TO ASHFORD

After crossing the existing Maidstone to Ashford railway, the Union Railway will run south of Hollingbourne, passing under the B2163 road. Through Warren Wood, the new railway follows the profile of the M20 motorway, widening the existing motorway cutting. This avoids the expensive tunnel in poor ground conditions which was previously proposed, and requires less extensive diversion of the A20 road.

Passing south of Harrietsham village, the railway will run in a narrow gap between the A20 (which is elevated at this point and will be supported by a retaining structure) and M20. At Sandway, where the railway is unable to follow the tight curves of the motorway, the earlier route ran to the south of the village. The new railway will run north of the village, through areas now identified for potential mineral extraction, and substantially in cutting, reducing visual impact.

INTERMEDIATE STATIONS

In addition to Ashford, intermediate stations on the Union Railway could be located at:

- Rainham or Purfleet (for international services);
- Stratford (for international and/or domestic services);
- Ebbsfleet (between Gravesend and Dartford - for international, or international and domestic services);
- Nashenden Valley (for domestic services).

After study of all the options by Union Railways, local authorities and potential promoters, a report will be submitted to the Government in the autumn.

ASHFORD

The new railway will continue alongside the M20 towards Ashford, curving to the north at Westwell Leacon, where a junction will be provided, allowing eastbound international and

domestic services to serve Ashford, and westbound trains to join the Union Railway.

The main Union Railway will depart from the earlier alignment through the centre of Ashford, and run to the north of the town. This route takes account of the revised Ashford International station, which will be served by the existing railway through the town. The new line can therefore avoid Ashford itself, and the substantial cost and disruption of a route through the town.

Where the new route crosses Sandyhurst Lane, an alignment up to 450 metres from the M20 motorway has been adopted, to minimise property impacts. The route passes under the lane in a cut-and-cover tunnel. Some community impact is inevitable, but less than if the route crossed Sandyhurst Lane close to the M20.

The route will continue clear of Junction 9 of the M20, and will require the partial relocation of Ashford sewage works. West of Willesborough Lees, the railway will go into tunnel under the motorway, emerging on the south side of Junction 10. It will continue across open fields and pass close to Loud House as it approaches Mersham.

ASHFORD TO THE CHANNEL TUNNEL

The Union Railway will run east from Ashford alongside the existing railway on its north side. A short cut-and-cover tunnel will enclose both new and existing railways at Mersham.

Land already safeguarded between the railway and M20 motorway at Westenhanger provides an opportunity for a rail freight operations facility, and a junction between the new and existing railways, if required.

The route continues parallel with the existing railway, passing Sandling and Sellindge. It crosses over Saltwood tunnel to the south side of the existing railway, and passes the rail freight operations facility at Dollands Moor to reach the boundary of Eurotunnel's railway at Cheriton.

Ashford: Willesborough Lees, M20 junction 10

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OTHER INFORMATION AVAILABLE

These leaflets can be obtained from the Information Centres, or by writing to the address below:

- The Union Railway
- The Environment and the Union Railway
- Noise and Vibration
- Tunnelling
- The Union Railway and the UK
- Business Benefits from the Union Railway
- Consultation and the Union Railway
- Commuters and the Union Railway

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